



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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NEW POLICIES MAKE MAN KEY COMPONENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL EQUATION,  
INTERIOR SECRETARY WATT TELLS OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Interior Secretary James Watt said today that the most important element in the Administration's natural resources policy "is the recognition that man is a key component in the environmental equation."

"Too often in the recent past there has been a strong tendency to write people out of the equation," Watt said in keynoting the annual meeting of the Outdoor Writers of America Association in Louisville, Ky. "This Administration begins with the notion that all Americans have a right to enjoy and benefit from their natural heritage."

The Secretary said that virtually every action he has taken as Secretary has been part of a strategy to protect the environment and to assure that current and future generations of Americans will be able to enjoy the scenic and other natural wonders of the country.

"My proposals for resource development are especially important for environmental protection because they provide for orderly and careful efforts to find and produce the energy, minerals and other resources essential to a modern, civilized country," Watt said. "Failure to follow an orderly plan would only compound pressures which eventually would erupt in a rampant, haphazard and destructive exploitation of natural resources in the not distant future."

Watt stressed he strongly supports a balanced approach to resource management, including laws "which say that some reasonable portions of America should be kept wild and remote and available to those fit enough, affluent enough or adventurous enough to enjoy the experience of backpacking and coping with nature. We need these areas as well for the regeneration of natural systems which are necessary for the existence of mankind upon earth.

"But let's be realistic. The vast majority of Americans who want to share in the scenic, wildlife and other natural treasures of this Nation are not rugged young backpackers. Most Americans look to our parks and our refuges to give them reasonably easy access, relatively safe shelter, and a chance to use their limited time and funds to greatest advantage.

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"Our Federal government has let these people down. We have allowed our national parks to deteriorate," Watt said.

He said the National Park Service had been aware of this, and attention was focused on the issue last fall in a General Accounting Office report on health and safety hazards in the parks.

"Our parks have fallen into appalling condition largely because of the recent emphasis on parkland acquisition," Watt said. "Our government was so busy grabbing out for more land that it failed to take care of what it already had."

Watt noted that he has proposed that more than \$100 million per year be taken from the Land and Water Conservation Fund each of the next five years to help repair and bring facilities up to par in the national parks.

"If we were to continue acquisition and continue to ignore the deterioration of the system, then we would be guilty of poor stewardship," Watt said. "It's time for us to do some common sense planning, to act with intelligence in future land acquisition."

Watt said some critics have encouraged the impression that he advocates mining and logging in national parks areas.

"We have never proposed that," Watt said. "But we will better manage other hundreds of millions of acres of public lands controlled by the multiple use laws so that the benefits of these lands can be shared by all Americans, not just the select few."

Watt said the Administration approves of efforts to increase the Dingell-Johnson program through which revenues are collected for conservation programs which will enhance boating and fishing. He cited Dingell-Johnson and the Pittman-Robertson program, which improves wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities, as "very much in concert with the philosophy of this Administration."

"These conservation programs have all the ingredients of good government," Watt said. "The beneficiaries pay, State government does the job and fishermen and hunters have improved opportunities -- everyone wins."

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Keynote Address  
Secretary James Watt  
Outdoor Writers Association of America  
Louisville, Ky., June 15, 1981

The latest newsletter from your association asks the penetrating question: "Is Jim Watt a fox or an eagle?"

I am glad so many of you showed up today to find out.

In front of a bunch of avid hunters, there is no way that I am going to admit to being a fox. Besides, it is obvious that I am a disaster as a fur-bearing animal.

Eagle seems much more appropriate -- bald eagle to be sure.

For the past almost six months I have had the privilege of soaring with eagles in the Administration of President Ronald Reagan. It has been an exhilarating experience to work with a President who is so dedicated to the basic principles upon which this Nation was founded.

My press clips, however, have brought me down to earth. Kinder critics liken me to the fox guarding the chicken coop. More unsophisticated critics have me waddling with the ducks. And the real tough ones suggest I should be exiled to live with the polecats. Now that's getting down to the way we talk about our adversaries out in Wyoming.

Your newsletter makes note of the fact that for the past six months I have done precious little public speaking and given very few interviews.

This was a conscious decision by me -- not because I dislike or distrust the press and certainly not because I am a reluctant public speaker. We simply did not have time to carry on a public relations campaign. We have been committed to helping Ronald Reagan bring change and a "New Beginning" to America.

It was my decision to concentrate fully on bringing in a tough team of managers to implement the changes that were so desperately needed at the Department of the Interior to bring balance in managing the resources of America.

Change has come to the Department, and much more rapidly than even I had anticipated. Balance and common sense are being restored. The job is not done, but it is under way.

Last month, when I was satisfied the Department was moving in the right direction, I started talking to reporters to explain, not what we were going to do, but rather what we have done and are doing.

We have paid a rather high price by concentrating on changes in administration, policy and programs during the early months. But in order to bring the pendulum back to the center, we necessarily set aside concern for our public image, thus we allowed our critics to run wild.

If I believed what the critics said about Jim Watt, I would sign a petition for his removal, too.

Since making myself available to the press, reporters have led off their questioning with inquiries as to why the critics are so hostile to me personally and to what I represent. I have given answers -- some speculative, some philosophical, some humorous -- but upon reflection I believe the real answer is political.

Based on press accounts, there are just a few leaders of the many critics. Those few leaders represent the narrow special interest groups who have lost their privileged access and their control of high government officials from the White House on down. On November 4, the American people voted for a change -- a change that would bring balance and move the pendulum back to the center.

Now new keys of access to the Reagan Administration have been passed out to all the hunters and fishermen and to all groups and people who believe in managing the lands, the waters, and the wildlife for the benefit of all Americans, not just the select few. The past privileged position of the select few has been terminated. Access is available to all Americans.

The new crew managing the Department of the Interior recognizes the value of wilderness, refuges, parks, recreation areas, waterways and the public lands. We are fully committed to taking care of what we have.

What do we have?

The Federal government administers 762 million acres, or one-third of the land area of the United States. This includes:

- 72 million acres of national parks to be preserved for the enjoyment of people;

- 84 million acres of national wildlife refuges, an area twice the size of the six New England States, to be managed for fish, wildlife and people;

- 190 million acres of national forest;

- And 341 million acres of public lands, an area twice the size of Texas, to be managed for multiple purpose values.

In these areas we have almost 80 million acres set aside by Congress as wilderness.

Millions of additional acres are being managed to protect wilderness values while studies are being made in order to make recommendations to Congress.

The critics have successfully confused some members of the press and the public into believing that this Administration seeks to mine and log the national park areas. We have never proposed that. But we will better manage other hundreds of millions of acres of public lands controlled by the multiple use laws so that the benefits of these lands can be shared by all Americans, not just the select few.

We are greatly concerned with and will reverse the deterioration and degradation of these lands and waters. To do this we will need the support of individuals, special interest groups and Congress.

It is no accident that I welcomed this as my first major address on conservation outside of Washington, D.C. You are the pipeline to a major segment of the American people who support good conservation measures. Your understanding is vital to our conservation program.

This Administration, and I personally, have a deep commitment to conservation.

During the past 15 to 20 years, Congress has passed a host of conservation laws to protect the environment and provide for balanced economic development so that America can have an improved quality of life and jobs, recreation opportunities and agricultural jobs, hunting and fishing experiences and mining jobs, wilderness experiences and tourism jobs, ORV and boating experiences and manufacturing jobs. A byproduct of these actions has been creation of jobs for outdoor writers.

Congress has vested in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior the responsibility for achieving many of these goals.

Because of these responsibilities, we have seen many references in the press to the Secretary of the Interior as "the Nation's Chief Environmental Officer."

That is a responsibility I accept gladly and will fulfill diligently.

What too many people overlook, however, is that the laws also make the Secretary of the Interior the Nation's chief developer of public lands, chief protector of Indian rights, chief National Park ranger, chief coal miner in the West, chief developer of dams, and on and on. At times it is difficult to comply with one law and not adversely impact other laws which I am obliged to administer.

Unfortunately, some of the special interest groups simply pick out one of the responsibilities of the Secretary and ignore the other duties which cause conflict within the Department. A good conservationist knows how to wisely use the lands as well as preserve them.

This Administration believes that all Americans have a right to enjoy their natural heritage.

That is why this Administration is enthusiastic about conservation programs such as the Dingell-Johnson (1950) and the Pittman-Robertson (1937) Acts.

As this group knows, these programs call for user fees to be placed on the manufacturers' sale of fishing and hunting equipment. The fees are apportioned to the States for investment in fish and wildlife habitat improvement. Through these programs, we have enhanced the opportunities for millions of Americans to enjoy good hunting and fishing experiences.

I thought every conservationist knew about these programs until I hosted a breakfast last month for 10 representatives from leading environmental and conservation groups. Roughly half of the invitees were preservationists and half advocates of land and wildlife management.

Your association president, Tom Opre, told the group of our new efforts to save the lake trout fishery in Lake Michigan. Ray Scott of BASS led off his comments by asking how many of the group had heard of the Dingell-Johnson program. My first thought was: "How could Ray ask such a stupid question -- everyone interested in natural resources knows of and supports Dingell-Johnson." But Ray was more perceptive than I. None of the preservationists indicated that they were aware of the program.

All of the conservationists -- those who believe in a balanced approach to managing our lands, waters and wildlife -- were, of course, aware of D-J and supportive of our efforts to help fishermen and hunters improve the great outdoors.

Since Dingell-Johnson was enacted in 1950, more than \$338 million in revenue has been apportioned to the States for fishery restoration and to support people's enjoyment of fishing and other aquatic activities.

For example, D-J funds have helped 42 State fish and wildlife agencies to construct or restore 341 public fishing lakes. More than 893,000 acres of existing lakes and 2,475 miles of streams have been made available to fishermen through improved access. Over 50 million hatchery-propagated game fish are stocked annually under the program.

No wonder almost 28 million Americans take out fishing licenses.

But most of the facilities benefit pleasure boaters and other recreation seekers as well as anglers.

Dingell-Johnson and Pittman-Robertson are very much in concert with the philosophy of this Administration.

The fees collected under the Acts go to the States for investment in fish and wildlife habitat improvement. These conservation programs have all the ingredients of good government -- the beneficiaries pay, State government does the job and fishermen and hunters have improved opportunities -- everyone wins.

Ronald Reagan supports these programs -- George Bush supports these programs -- I support these programs -- the entire Administration supports these programs.

We support expansion of the Dingell-Johnson program to include some boats, motors and fishing equipment not now covered. With the additional monies that would be generated, new fishing opportunities could be created.

According to a recent survey by the American Fisheries Society, States spent more than \$272 million on fisheries in 1980. An additional \$116 million was needed, however, to maintain ongoing programs. In fiscal 1980, almost \$31 million was apportioned to the States under the Dingell-Johnson program. If we can increase this, I would be most pleased.

Perhaps I have just made a mistake in saying that I approve of programs which improve fishing, boating and other recreational opportunities for tens of millions of Americans. My critics will cite this as further evidence that I have a cockeyed concept of stewardship -- making more of the outdoors accessible to the average citizen.

So let me add at this point that I also understand and support the idea -- and the laws -- which say that some reasonable portions of America should be kept wild and remote and available to those fit enough, affluent enough or adventurous enough to enjoy the experience of backpacking and coping with nature. We need these areas as well for the regeneration of natural systems which are necessary for the existence of mankind upon the Earth.

But let's be realistic. The vast majority of Americans who want to share in the scenic, wildlife and other natural treasures of this Nation are not rugged young backpackers. Most Americans look to our parks and our refuges to give them reasonably easy access, relatively safe shelter, and a chance to use their limited time and funds to greatest advantage.

Our Federal government has let these people down.

We have allowed our national parks to deteriorate. Our people at Interior have been acutely aware of this for years. Last fall the General Accounting Office zeroed in on the health and safety hazards in the parks.

Our parks have fallen into appalling condition largely because of the recent emphasis on parkland acquisition. Our government was so busy grabbing out for more land that it failed to take care of what it already had.

Since the Land and Water Conservation Fund was established in the 1960s, more than 2.8 million acres of land have been purchased by Federal agencies at a cost in excess of \$2.4 billion. (More than 2 million acres costing some \$2.6 billion were acquired through the State/side of the LWCF.)

Let me make it clear that I think this has been a great program. I was once in charge of administering it, and it has done tremendous good.

But it has gotten out of focus if not out of hand.

That is why we imposed a near-moratorium on allocations from the Fund for land purchases for the rest of this year and for 1982.

That is why we have proposed to expand the scope of the Fund to include restoration and improvement as well as acquisition.

The GAO report says it could take \$1.6 billion to restore and bring maintenance up to par in our national parks.

We have made a modest proposal to take over \$100 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for each of the next five years to use for this program. Other funds would come from the general treasury and new proposals such as a public benefits corporation.

The critics want us to keep pumping Federal funds into acquisition at a time when we are having serious economic problems and haven't been able to allocate sufficient funds for maintaining and restoring what we already own.

They want us to keep grabbing more land when we haven't properly managed what we already have.

They argue that overcrowding of our parks is evidence of the need for more parkland. What is overlooked is the fact that acquisition of potential parkland in itself doesn't do a thing to relieve the problem. Parks have to have roads, campgrounds, latrines, and other facilities to be used by an appreciable number of people. Parks have to be managed and then taken care of.

If we repair, restore and provide better management for the parks we have, and if we properly develop the backlog of parklands acquired in recent years, we will be able to adequately meet more of the needs of the American people.

If we were to continue acquisition and continue to ignore the deterioration of the system, then we would be guilty of poor stewardship. It's time for us to do some common sense planning, to act with intelligence in future land acquisition.

Our near-moratorium on parkland acquisition will not affect the wetlands program -- it is proceeding. We will acquire from willing sellers those fragile wetlands which might be lost forever if there is delay.

Our proposals for the Land and Water Conservation Fund will be beneficial in the future for the National Wildlife Refuges and other facilities which need restoration and maintenance funding.



This is one of the few instances in which we are proposing changes in legislation to bring about needed balance in management of natural resources. The Department will not offer much in the way of a legislative agenda; we will improve management of our natural resources by providing better management of the Department. It is interesting to note that the Democrats do not have a legislative program either. Nor do the critics. There is good law on the books now. What is needed is good administration of the law.

Some of the purists have sought to deny enjoyment of certain recreation opportunities in our national park areas. For example, they have sought to eliminate the use of motors on rafts on the Colorado River and to eliminate stables and horseback riding in the national parks. I consider these activities to be legitimate recreation experiences. In a humorous, frolicking and quick response to a series of concessioners' questions on the concern they had that horses would be forbidden in parks and that motors on rafts would be eliminated, I shot back a quip stating that they need not be concerned because "I don't like to paddle and I don't like to walk."

The critics took the quote out of context, distorted it, and have successfully had the press report that I don't like the outdoors. Unfortunately, "A lie can run around the world before truth can get its boots on."

My love and appreciation of the great outdoors came as a child when my parents introduced us to camping, hunting and fishing in my home state of Wyoming. I gave those same experiences to my two children.

With my family or with friends I have fished the creeks and streams and lakes of Wyoming. I have fished for bass in Louisiana, salmon off the coast of the Pacific Northwest, flounder in the Chesapeake, marlin in the seas off American Samoa, and bottom fish in the Red Sea.

My son and I lifted our canoe onto our old station wagon on many weekends so we could paddle through the backwaters of the Chesapeake and the waters of Colorado. In addition, I have enjoyed the Boundary Water Canoe Area and Lake Powell; snorkeling off the Florida Keys, and water skiing and sailing on the manmade lakes of Colorado and Wyoming, floating the Snake and Platte in Wyoming, the Colorado in Arizona and the New River in West Virginia.

Recreation -- to re-create one's soul -- is not limited to the pursuit of wildlife nor does it require great skill. While I am not a good skier, I love the thrill of skiing the Colorado Rockies.

My son and I went trail biking near the Canyonlands National Park. What a thrill for us. After our first night out in the early spring, we awakened to find 12 inches of snow covering our tents and motor bikes. Getting out of that area reminded me of our snowmobile trip in the Wind River mountains along the Continental Divide in Wyoming the year before. As we stood on our snowmobiles atop those mighty and majestic mountains, we could see how those very snow packs would melt and flow to the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of California. The beauty of God's creation is captivating.

I have hiked the Appalachian Trail, bicycled across the State of Wyoming and through Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. I have walked through the parks of many cities and strolled in our neighborhoods and walked the beaches as the tide rolled in and out.

All of these experiences have been enriching.

There are some recreation activities I have not yet experienced. But they are just as legitimate and need to be provided for, just as do the more popular ones.

It is not the variety or the frequency of outdoor experiences that makes a person a good Secretary of the Interior.

The test is whether the person has the ability and understands the duty to provide the stewardship necessary for the management (use and preservation) of America's great beauty and variety so that others, present and future generations, can have similar opportunities. I care.

Virtually every action which I have taken as Secretary of the Interior has been part of a strategy to protect the environment and to assure that current and future generations of Americans will be able to enjoy the scenic and other natural wonders of our country. My proposals for resource development are especially important for environmental protection because they provide for orderly and careful efforts to find and produce the energy, minerals and other resources essential to a modern, civilized country. Failure to follow an orderly plan would only compound pressures which eventually would erupt in a rampant, haphazard and destructive exploitation of natural resources in the not distant future.

Most important of all is the recognition that man is a key component in the environmental equation. Too often in the recent past, there has been a strong tendency to write people out of the equation. This Administration begins with the notion that all Americans have a right to enjoy and benefit from their natural heritage.